

WELSH REPORT

IT LOOKS like many of us have got the bird. Budgie, that is.

Sales of the Cardiff-based band's album, released last summer, are now just short of 10,000. Their single, "Whisky River," released last month, is also selling well I'm told.

Big news on Budgie is that we can expect a new album, possibly called "Squawk," in May. Like the first, it has been cut at Rockfield Studios, near Monmouth, where Dave Edmunds laid down his "I Hear You Knockin'" hit.

Burke Shelley, Ray Phillips and Tony Bourge have always been popular in Wales, particularly in the area around their base-camp, Cardiff. They draw vast crowds this side of the border, and have gigged here quite a bit recently.

Tomorrow (Friday April 21) they're due at Ynysawdre Youth Centre, Bridgend.

Things are looking good in all sectors for them. Obviously, the guy who said "The only good thing that ever came out of Wales was the road to England" just hadn't heard Budgie.

I WAS glad to see Welsh-born Mal (formerly Mal Ryder of Mal Ryder and the Primitives) come up with a solo single in this country, last week.

It seems strange that Mal didn't do a thing here, either solo or with his band, since he's made it so big in Italy, where he has won three gold discs and made a couple of film appearances. His first record over there sold half a million.

Anyway, the best of luck to him with "Mighty Mighty Roly Poly."

A lot of people, particularly in Wales, will be sad to hear that Mary Hopkin will probably be cutting out live performances pretty soon.

On the brighter side, however, there has been a deal of favourable reaction to her husband Tony Visconti's



Hopkin joins Welsh cause

recent comments that Mary will probably cut a few tracks in Welsh.

I wonder if she realises just how much that would boost the timeless campaign over here for equality for the Welsh language.

As one who has heard a ton and a half of Welsh folk songs — and Welsh pop too, for that matter — I feel Mary, by returning to her roots, could bring a breath of fresh air to the whole Welsh scene, as well as the national one.

Thank God she's shedding that awful ad-man's image at last. BY THE way, if you live near the Southern border it may well be worth seeing the new improved Stackridge at Bristol Polytechnic tomorrow (Friday).

Looking forward to Saturday, it will be interesting to see how Roy Wood's Electric Light Orchestra do before their first Welsh crowd at Bangor University. Some artists look upon it as a pretty

MAURICE BOWER

FRONT ROW REVIEWS

USUALLY THE Cameo Royale in London's Charing Cross Road shows those juicy, meaty films, with plenty of flesh flying around. The nearest the Emerson, Lake and Palmer film came to that on the preview last Thursday was Carl Palmer stripping to the waist during his elaborate, but technically good, solo work-out.

Maybe you've noticed; he does that on stage quite a lot. Just about at the same point in every solo. Whether it be on "Nutcracker", or in the case of the film, an improvised "Rondo", which followed "Knife Edge". In concert ELP are predictable good.

But in this Crown International production the band are seen in a refreshing new way. And it is colourful and visual, with amazing sound effects which take away some of the group's sameness.

Filmed at the London Lyceum, the film is quite an achievement. Just about every colour imaginable is utilised, now and again making one of the three a spaced-out blur. But it's effective, and my interest was barely lost throughout.

The band work through several numbers, including "Take A Pebble" and those already mentioned. Understandably, "Pictures At An Exhibition", from which the film takes its name, is highlighted.

Each performance of this piece, that perhaps gathered more followers for them than anything is refreshingly new each time I hear it. And in this Lindsey Clennell interpretation it has more.

Mind you, the sound is comparably weak to visual effects. A lot of the bass is distorted, and the drums often fade too far or come through too much. This, I have been informed, was only for that performance, due to a hired PA.

That did little to spoil my enjoyment. The Strawbs film, including the movie set to "Grave New World", was a straighter production which came over better soundwise. And from that one blood-soaked celluloid adventure, had just as much impact as "Pictures". Scaffold's "Mr. Plod" rounded up the early morning viewing. — **Tony Stewart.**

HOOKFOOT

EVEN IF they'd wanted to, Hookfoot couldn't have failed at Eltham Falcon on Friday. Even before they came on stage the audience were shouting, and after their first number, "Flying In The USA", from their second album, they had the gig in the palms of their hands.

Also from that album was "If I Had The Words", and from their first came "Nature Changes", featuring some nice harmonies.

"Let Bygones Be Bygones" was so new that singer-guitarist Ian Duck had to read the words from a scrap of paper stuck to the microphone.

Their version of Neil Young's "Ohio" was beautiful, maintaining the impact of the original. And their handling of the Leon Russell/Freddie King number, "Palace Of The King" was just as good.

After their first encore, "Shoe Shine Boy", the promoter stirred things up so much that the group HAD to return — for a 10-minute jam.

For a band who have never played in South-East London before, Hookfoot got an amazing and well-deserved reception. — **Pamela Holman.**

THE MJQ

IT'S a long time since I last heard the Modern Jazz Quartet live, and a lot of memories flooded back when John Lewis (piano) led Milt Jackson (vibraphone), Percy Heath (bass) and Connie Kay (drums) on the stage at London's Hammer-smith Odeon last Saturday.

The quartet opened with a composition dedicated to the Monterey Jazz Festival, titled "Monterey Dust". Then came what must be their best-known number, John Lewis's "Django", and it still sounded as fresh as ever. Kay has added a few more



Film trickery: Emerson and Lake

ELP flash in the hall of flying flesh...

cymbals since I last saw him, and he used them to very good effect in the suite "Venus And Mars, Visitors To Earth".

What turned me on most was John Lewis's adaptation of the second movement of Rodrigo's Guitar Concerto — made popular by Miles Davis on "Sketches Of Spain", where trumpet replaced guitar.

— **Simon Stable.**

GYPSY

NOW THAT Gypsy have lost Rod Read, one of their three guitarists, they don't seem to know in what direction they want to head.

But their act was still pretty good when I saw them at London's City University last Tuesday, supported by solo artist Mark Ashton.

They opened with "Changes Coming", the single released about 18 months ago which just missed the charts. This number is certainly one of their best.

"Don't Cry On Me" and "There's A Party" were both inclined towards country-rock, and "Comes A Time" had a simple light-hearted feel.

Gypsy's change of style came during the last three numbers (the titles weren't announced), which were long and even boring at times. The happy feeling of the first few songs was lost in a haze of guitar trips.

When Gypsy know what they want to play they should be a nice little band, but until then I suggest you stay for the half-hour. — **Pamela Holman.**

CHRISTOPHER NEIL

INTRODUCING Christopher Neil, Alan Freeman said this young lad was going to be a star. Wowie, I thought, another one to add to the hundreds who are still piled up

busking up at Edgware Road Tube station. In other words, I was cynical — mainly because I believe an artist should be accepted for what he does, not for what he might do.

The setting was the Music Workshop, off Duke Street, London. People were crammed into the cellar, half-way up the stairs, and around the upstairs bar. Neil was about the most comfortable — cramped on stage with four musicians.

He sings. He has a high range, and tends to struggle to reach the notes just out of it. His first song wasn't particularly impressive, but he got going afterwards. The trouble was he never seemed to spark that much.

His voice is best described as something like Colin Blunstone's, with a similar frail quality and style of arrangement. He doesn't strike me as being original, but has a pleasant enough voice working on his own material. He could do things, given time. — **Tony Stewart.**

FREE GIG

WITH GNIDROLOG topping the bill, the final NME free night in the present series at London's Marquee proved one of the most successful of these concerts which started back in October last year with America and Linda Lewis.

Playing tracks off their new album, "In Spite Of Harry's Toe-Nail", Gnidrolog proved to be a good punchy band, coming across better on stage than they do on record. Deservedly they were called back for an encore.

Earlier in the evening the Natural Acoustic Band had been equally impressive with the clear-voiced Krysis Kocjan outstanding.

Also on the bill as a surprise addition were Cottonwood, who played a tasty set. They deserve a record contract. — **Jack James**

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